



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Roy K. Stovall

DATE OF BIRTH: April 14, 1934 GENDER: Male

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: February 2, 2012

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: N.M. Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum

INTERVIEWER: Donna M. Wojcik

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM

TRANSCRIBED: September 7, 2013

NUMBER OF TAPES: Two

ABTRACTOR: Donna M. Wojcik

DATE ABSTRACTED: February 9, 2012

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Describes growing up on his grandfather's Aleman Ranch on the Jornada del Muerto.

DATE RANGE: 1934 – 1950s

ABSTRACT (Important Topics in Order of Appearance):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

The Aleman Ranch is the site of the first well on the Jornada del Muerto. The well was dug by hand in 1867 by Jack Martin; it took two years to dig the well. Martin also built the ranch headquarters there.

Roy Stovall was born in Carlsbad, N.M., in 1934. His grandfather, Roy K. Stovall, came to New Mexico from Texas in the late 1920s as an oil well contractor. Potash was discovered at the site of an oil well he drilled east of Carlsbad. Roy K. bought a ranch near Carlsbad, eventually sold it, and bought the Aleman Ranch in 1938. The original adobe ranch house at Aleman is described.

Stovall, his parents, and older brother moved to the Aleman Ranch when he was three years old and lived there until he and his brother were old enough to attend school. Since there was no school near the ranch his family moved to Roy so the boys could attend school. His dad bought a farm at Roy and stayed there until World War II began. After selling the ranch, the family moved to Carlsbad where his dad became a civilian instructor.

The Aleman Ranch was 192 sections of open range made up of state and federal-leased land. Cowhands often found arrowheads and were always adding to the arrowhead basket at headquarters. Although there was no naturally occurring water on the ranch when Roy K. owned it, it was reported that at one time there had been a spring that Indians had frequented at Prisor Mountain. Roy K. ran about 1,000 head of cattle on the ranch, which was somewhat larger than most of the ranches in the area. Neighboring ranches are briefly discussed. Stovall recalls riding a horse to Cutter to get the mail—a trip of six miles.

Roy K. drilled additional wells and put in water pipelines. His herd was mainly Hereford cattle, but in the late 1940s he brought the first Brahman cattle to the area. Stovall recalls that one time a Brahman steer being loaded onto a pickup truck ran up the chute and jumped over the truck. They had to learn how to work Brahman cattle differently from the Hereford cattle, but Hereford cattle proved to be more profitable.

The terrain on the Aleman Ranch, grazing fees at the time, and drought are discussed. During times of drought it is important to supplement feed with cottonseed cake or meal to ensure a good calf crop. Over the years improvements were done at headquarters. Stovall recalls that his grandmother screened in the porches and added fish ponds.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

Prior to World War II a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was built near ranch headquarters. Stovall recalls going to the camp to see his first movie when he was about four years old. There was no electricity on the ranch until the early 1950s so wind chargers were used, and during the time that his grandfather owned the ranch there was no telephone service.

The original ranch brand and his grandfather's brand are briefly discussed. Stovall worked at the ranch during the summer months until he graduated from high school. He recalls that there were only a few hands working there but that during roundups neighbors would help. If more workers were needed, they were hired from Hot Springs (now Truth or Consequences). Roy K. would take approximately six or seven hundred calves to market at the railhead at Upham. Ranchers made good money for their cattle from 1941 to approximately 1946. Before there was a railhead at Upham, ranchers had to drive the cattle to Magdalena for shipment. Market fluctuations are briefly discussed.

Most ranchers prefer to rotate cattle herds, but some ranchers still prefer big pastures. "Cows are not dumb," says Stovall. Cattle can see when it is raining in one spot on a ranch and will drift over in that direction because they know that green grass will soon be there. Stovall believes that with smaller pastures you can check and work your cattle better than you can in large pastures. He does not recall any losses due to wildlife or disease. Prairie dogs were a problem in some areas, and ranch hands always carried a hoe with them to cut out patches of locoweed.

During college Stovall worked for the Jornada Experimental Station. He feels that the Taylor Grazing Act is one of the best things ever passed by Congress because it opened up the range for smaller ranch outfits. Work on the Aleman Ranch was hard work, beginning before the sun was up and ending with the evening meal. He does not recall any special gatherings at the ranch other than the Pioneer Day held in February 1946, a day for old-timers who once rode the Jornada range to share stories and to enjoy good food with friends.

The bright flash of light and high winds marking the detonation of the Trinity atomic bomb test was observed at headquarters, but Stovall did not hear of any adverse effect on cattle as a result. Mealtime and leisure activities are briefly discussed.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

Stovall attended his early school years in a one-room school house in Roy. He attended New Mexico State University, specializing in range management. After graduation he went to work for the Bureau of Land Management and enjoyed working closely with ranchers. He was the area manager in Las Cruces for twelve years before moving to Roswell to work as Chief of Operations for the BLM office there. Higher education was encouraged by his parents.

His best memories of the ranch were working with the livestock. He believes that the quality of life on ranches today is better now than when he was on the ranch because ranchers can use all-terrain vehicles instead of horses for transportation. He is concerned for the future of ranching because ranches are not being passed down from generation to generation; the reason his grandfather sold the Aleman Ranch in 1952 was because his dad did not want to ranch.

The current location of Spaceport America on land that was once a part of the Aleman Ranch is briefly discussed. Today Stovall spends his leisure hours making bronze statues of ranch life.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B: Blank